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FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: CULTURAL DIVERSITY CONVENTION MOVES DOWN THE TRACKS

1. (U) Summary. The UNESCO secretariat says it intends to promote the Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (aka the cultural diversity convention) as part of a package of conventions dealing with cultural diversity broadly defined. End summary.

2. (SBU) Senior Legal Advisor Peay and DCM met May 15 with Katerina Stenou, Director of Division of Cultural policies at UNESCO. Stenou's section was responsible for the drafting of the cultural expressions convention and will now be responsible for the Convention's implementation. Stenou said that she was responsible for the formulation used by the Director-General (DG) at the last Executive Board that linked the Cultural Expressions Convention within the 2003 Intangible Cultural Convention and the 1972 World Heritage Convention. (Note: the Intangible cultural convention has just gone into effect, 30 months after its passage, a record for adoption of a UNESCO convention. Cultural expressions partisans have expressed the hope they can move even faster. The U.S. was the first signatory of the 1972 World Heritage Convention.)

3. (SBU) The DG effectively used this linkage during the recent Executive Board to bat away an incessant stream of questions from the French and Canadians asking what the Secretariat plans to do to implement the cultural expressions convention. Stenou noted that the Canadians were dissatisfied with her answer and that she has since received a long letter from the Canadian Ambassador.

4. (SBU) Stenou also said that her division is currently formulating a set of questions and answers about the Convention. She would not share the draft but indicated that the document will make it clear that the Convention is not to be used to contravene existing trade agreements. (Note: Stenou reinforced this message in a public meeting about cultural diversity at UNESCO headquarters on May 16.) This will be part of a package that will also include the texts of all three cultural conventions.

5. (SBU) Stenou expressed some concern that her direct channel to the DG on implementing the Convention will be lost when the new French head of the cultural sector is officially appointed in the coming days. That will not stop Stenou from representing UNESCO at an upcoming Francophonie Ministers meeting in Rabat. (Comment: The irony of the Francophonie Organization--an organization united by a language imposed by colonialism--pushing for "Cultural Diversity", seems to be lost on the organizations' membership.) Stenou did indicate that she has heard grumbling from African Ambassadors who are unhappy with the results of the Convention. Stenou also pointed out that the final declaration of the EU-Latin America summit in Vienna last weekend included a point calling for cooperation between the two groups to get the cultural expressions convention passed as soon as possible.

Oliver